

Four People Found Dead from Suspected Overdoses Wednesday in New Castle County; People Struggling with Addiction Urged to Connect with Treatment

NEW CASTLE (Dec. 14, 2017) – Four people were found dead Wednesday in New Castle County from suspected overdoses in separate incidents, increasing the concern for additional spikes in deaths during the holidays and prompting health officials to urge people struggling with addiction and their families to seek out a connection to treatment. Through Dec. 13, the total number of deaths from suspected overdoses this year in Delaware is 227.

“People suffering from addiction are already vulnerable and too often their vulnerabilities can be heightened during a stressful holiday season,” said DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a board-certified family physician. “The stress of facing their families during holiday events while suffering from addiction or being excluded from family events because of their addiction can be a trigger point for people in active use. The most important thing that families can do is to help their loved ones find a connection to treatment and to get them to that initial intake.”

The Division of Public Health has special holiday-themed digital advertising set to run through New Year’s Day on Facebook, Instagram and various websites. The digital ads encourage those struggling with addiction to “Picture a Holiday Without Addiction” and links the viewer directly to

HelpIsHereDE.com.

DHSS' Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) Director Elizabeth Romero encouraged individuals in active substance use to see a medical provider immediately or call DHSS' 24/7 Crisis Services Hotline to be connected to trained crisis professionals who can discuss treatment options. In New Castle County, the number is 1-800-652-2929. In Kent and Sussex counties, the number is 1-800-345-6785. Individuals and families also can visit DHSS' website, www.HelpIsHereDE.com, for addiction treatment and recovery services in Delaware or nearby states.

"During the stressful holiday season, our state agencies and community partners are a phone call or web click away," said Elizabeth Romero, DSAMH Division Director. "Help is here and we are ready to offer you or your loved ones a safe and compassionate ear and connection to treatment. For our friends in Sussex, please come to our open community event this evening to learn more about the help you can receive in that county and beyond."

DSAMH will host its final free addiction-related community session today from 2-7 p.m. today (Dec. 14) at Delaware Technical Community College's Owens Campus, Carter Partnership Center, 21179 College Drive, Georgetown. The community session is an easy way for people to talk with treatment experts, learn about local services and supports, and have access to a training class on how to use the overdose-reversing medication naloxone. A Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health trainer will lead the naloxone training sessions. Previous sessions were held Nov. 30 in Kent County and Dec. 6 in New Castle County.

In 2016, 308 people died in Delaware from overdoses, up 35 percent from the 228 people who died in 2015. The official total of overdose deaths often lags six to eight weeks behind as the Division of Forensic Science awaits the results of

toxicology screens.

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The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of life of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.